

Assignment 1

Conference Paper

Title:

The emergency of YouTube as a Web 2.0 platform has cultivated a community of ordinary celebrity call YouTubers

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Introduction

The emergence of YouTube as a Web 2.0 platform has cultivated a community of ordinary people becoming celebrities call YouTubers. These YouTubers are often referred to as micro-celebrities (Martinez & Olsson, 2019, p.3). Web 2.0 refers to a movement where websites no longer just publish static content for people to consume. It represents a host of new websites that interacts with its audience by providing features where the user can generate their own content and collaborate with other users. Such websites include blogs, video sharing, wikis and social media sites. One of the most popular Web 2.0 platforms is YouTube which is a video sharing website. This site allows ordinary people to upload and share videos made by themselves free of charge. This platform has given very ordinary people an avenue to express themselves and share their interest with everyone else in the world. Thus, creating a community of YouTubers where everyday people constantly upload video to attract viewers and followers. This thesis will focus on this community and how it came about, paying special attention to the cause of such community and demonstrating with empirical evidence and reference that this community was created by the emergence of YouTube as the leading Web 2.0 platform of the 21th century. We will first give a brief explanation of what it means to use Web 2.0 platforms and then the phenomenon of YouTube. We then briefly go into the history of YouTube and how it came to prominence and the de facto video sharing site that everyone goes to. After which, we will dive deeper into the community that YouTube has created and the so call YouTubers subculture. We will examine what is it like being a YouTuber and what it means to belong to an online community. We then inspect the idea behind the various communities behind YouTube and how they are formed. Next, we investigate the collaborative nature of YouTube where each fan can interact and communicate with the YouTuber via the comment section. This allows the YouTuber direct access to each follower or fanbase that they have which allows them a much closer relationship than any other form of celebrity relationships.

The emergency of Web 2.0 was a gradual phenomenon that span decades beginning around 2002 (Web 2.0, 2019). Its arrival was a culmination of various advances in fields such as network, personal computers and the Internet. But mainly was the maturity of the Internet has reached the next phrase. Web 1.0 mainly consisted of static resources on a webpage, communication was one-way traffic and so it was more a broadcasting model. However, Web 2.0 completely changed this mode of content consumption. In the Web 2.0 era, users are able to interact with each other via web platforms specifically designed to allow users to engage and communicate with each other. Popular Web 2.0 platforms such as blogs, wikis and social media sites all provides functionality for users to upload or leave content about each other. To summarise, Web 2.0 platforms are mainly a participatory culture where users share and collaborate online via a common website. YouTube was one of the early pioneers of the Web 2.0 platforms. It allows any users to upload a short personal video to the site for everyone to watch. This proved to be a huge success and it captured the creativity of everyone around the world. Soon people were uploading and watching videos every minute on the site. According to Clememt Chau, YouTube received 100.9 million unique viewers in January 2009 alone (Chau, 2010). YouTube not only gave users the ability to upload and share their videos, it also offered a wide range of features that support the participatory culture which is what drives the Web 2.0 craze around the world. Some of those features include tagging, like, following and most importantly commenting on a video. Not to mention, the content of the video can also be used to generate interactions and collaborations between producers and consumers. For example, a video producer could in the video ask the viewers to leave a comment if they want to see more of such type of videos or they could ask the viewers to write about what they want to see the video producer do next. These are all incentives for everyone involved to interact with each other and form a community around the content they produce. Another reason why YouTube was able to create such a massive community around their users is because the technology behind creating video has advanced dramatically in the past decades. These days, anyone with a smartphone can record and upload videos directly to YouTube and start producing. This low entry to the video sharing network has allowed many people an avenue to promote themselves who otherwise might not have the opportunity to do so.

The power of YouTube extends beyond just a social networking platform. It enables every ordinary person a voice, an avenue, a platform which to express themselves freely without much censorship or regulation. Your content or videos are evaluated by your peers, the very audience that are the same as you. So, this is what builds the community. It is completely self-governed. So, in order for someone to remain relevant and popular within the community they will listen to the comments and adjust their content to cater for the masses. This concept is what mainly drives the community forward. Another major attraction or reason for YouTube's enormous popularity is that it is made up of almost all user-generated content or UGC which means the digital content on the site is produced by ordinary people rather than corporations or professional advertising agencies. The UGC is produced for the general public by the general public. This idea has organically led people to comment and participate in a discussion on various contents produced. Although many users are purely consumers of the digital content, they will however still engage the producer by posting a comment to the video to voice their opinion on the particular content. However, the people who consume as well as produce content are said to be "prosumers" (Waldron, 2013). YouTube is predominantly driven by this ordinary community, in fact, many YouTube users express discomfort when they view content created by large corporations in their homepage or section of the media site (Burgess, Green & Jenkins, 2009). This community of ordinary people is what drives the site forward. However, it is worth noting that this community of ordinary people might otherwise not have banded together if it were not for the common interest of sharing videos online. What YouTube has provided to these people is a platform to come together and share a common interest. This platform has provided a place for them to find other like-minded people to share their creative thoughts and imaginations. The rise of YouTube is not a coincidence as it coincides with the rise of the Web 2.0 movement. Along with Web 2.0 comes the trend of the sharing and participatory culture which powered the popularity of YouTube as a sharing platform. With Web 2.0, many individuals are increasingly becoming more comfortable with sharing their personal experience or life events online with the public which was not the case a couple of decades ago as the Internet was still quite a new concept and many people were hesitating to share anything online.

The participatory culture that YouTube has generated is worth exploring further as this is the driving force behind the formation of various communities within the YouTube world. There are a number of elements that contribute to the making of a participatory culture. Firstly, there is a low entry barrier which means anyone can quickly and easily participate or contribute to the community. And then there is a culture of contribution counts, for example, every action on the site is recorded and displayed for viewers to use as a measurement of their popularity or the relevance of their content. This information is presented instantaneously back to the viewers such as number of viewers, number of followers and comments. These indicators provide instant feedback to the content producer in order for them to improve and adapt their presence accordingly. Moreover, these feedbacks come directly from the audience they are trying to reach, and it is unfiltered, so they are getting the most accurate signals from their audience. This cycle of video producing and receiving instant feedback is what propels YouTube into such a popular participatory system.

Another contributing factor to this culture is the sense of social connection. This plays directly into the concept of the Web 2.0 environment where users share content and feedback with each other via the various features offered by the platform. Users have also created innovative and creative ways to connect and collaborate with other content producers. Some of these methods include adding an extra segment to the end of a video asking viewers to nominate what they want to see next or challenging other YouTubers to something they've just achieved. The latter method is extremely popular amongst social media celebrities in order to drive up views and attract new followers. By challenging other YouTubers, this will quickly become an Internet trend that spreads all over the Internet and other social media sites (Chau, 2010).

YouTube communities are made up of various groups based on their interests and type of entertainment they offer. For example, one of the biggest categories is vloggers which is short for video bloggers or video loggers. These people will produce frequent videos of their day to day life

as something like a video diary. Viewers are attracted to these vloggers purely for their personality and their life experiences. This is a very intimate relationship between the vlogger and their viewers as they are constantly sharing their life with a large audience, so it is important for them to be careful what they decide to share online.

Conclusion

With the emergence of the Web 2.0 phenomenon, we have completely changed the way we communicate and collaborate online. Our threshold for privacy has also changed along the way. We find ourselves sharing a lot more intimate and personal experiences and emotions than ever before. Web 2.0 platforms has allowed us to reach out to complete strangers and share a brief moment of connection over a common theme. Platform such as YouTube has also allowed strangers to band together to share their interest and passion on common subject matters. YouTube has provided an easy access for ordinary people to express themselves and their creativity publicly with a very low entry barrier. This has created millions of communities all around the world where everyday someone can contribute to this amazing culture from the comfort of their own homes.

Due to the rise of the Web 2.0 environments and the various advances in different areas of technology and networks, people are able to connect and interact with each other more simply and quickly than ever before. YouTube has ultimately capitalised on this movement and have thus created an extremely successful Web 2.0 platform utilising some of the most common social networking features found on other popular Web 2.0 platforms. Some of those features include recording viewership of all videos, allow viewers to follow each other and most importantly allow viewers to give comments and reply to comments on every video ever uploaded to YouTube. These features together with the contents in the actual videos have allowed viewers and content producers to connect on a personal level. This in turn created the community around like-minded individuals who shares a common theme or interests. These communities are formed organically on the platform without much interference from the YouTube platform itself. All YouTube had to do was to ensure it is providing the most intuitive and intelligent way to search for various videos in its repository. Without YouTube, ordinary people would not otherwise get the opportunity to showcase their creativity and talent and reach such a wide audience at next to no cost.

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